

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

MBE / WBE Project Group Minutes

Meeting 2 – September 26, 2006

Members:

James Allen
Hon. Vince Anello
Colleen DiPirro
Tim Doolittle
Hon. Wright Ellis
Matthew Enstice
Andrew Eszak
Samuel Ferraro
Hon. Joel Giambra
Hon. Timothy Kennedy
Hon. Kathy Konst
David Lacki
Celeste Lawson
Gregory Lewis
Hon. Cynthia Locklear
Hon. Peter McMahon
Hon. John Mills
Hal Morse
Jo Nasoff-Finton
Hon. Sean O'Connor
John Percy
Dr. Gary Praetzel
Melinda Rath Sanderson
David Roll
Hon. William Ross
Diane Ruzala
Laura St. Pierre Smith
Christopher Schoepflin
Hector Titus
Timothy Wanamaker
Peter Wendel

Present:

Hector Titus (Chair)	Maryetta Pugh
Tracey Houston	Jackie Stover
Hon. Kathy Konst	Linda Terrell
Gerald McDuffie	Tod Kniazuk (Administrator)

Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership (ENRP) Economic Development Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus welcomed the group. Those in attendance introduced themselves and the organizations they represent.

ENRP Administrator Tod Kniazuk presented the minutes of meeting one. He referenced the three components identified at the meeting, and offered that this group could work most effectively in the short term on the first two; access to information and review of qualifications, and the intake mechanism (application). We should also support legislative efforts regarding the third component, the certification process itself.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale
Lawrence Witul

Titus gave the opinion that if someone is certified by one agency, it should be quick and easy to get other certifications. He added that you would think federal certification would be "universal" but that's not the case.

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Maryetta Pugh (Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority) explained the reason that federal certification does not easily translate is because they do not certify as minority or women business enterprises, but as disadvantaged business enterprises. The NFTA was left out of Article 15A; inclusion would have allowed them to issue state certification. She agreed that federal certification should supercede any others and should therefore be applicable.

Titus asked if we could work on a standardized application. Gerald McDuffie (Empire State Development) replied that Buffalo, Erie

County, and ESD use the same application, but that there are differences between that application and the federal one.

Jackie Stover (Erie County) noted that applicants can literally photocopy their completed application to use for the state, city, or county. All three also use the same 51 percent threshold of ownership.

McDuffie suggested that perhaps a “fast track” could be established by issuing a temporary certification once a first one is obtained. Stover noted that the county used to do temporary certification but cut back and now only do so in very clear cut cases where a contract is pending. She added that the process usually only takes two weeks to 30 days. The application itself is fairly simple, but there are some additional documents required to prove you’re really in business.

Kniazuk summed up that it seems like there’s a good process in place, but that easier access to information might be needed. Hon. Kathy Konst (Erie County Legislature, Lancaster Chamber of Commerce) added that outreach would be a good idea.

Tracey Houston (Buffalo Niagara Partnership) offered that her feedback is that businesses don’t know which certification they need to do business for the “prime.”

Kniazuk posed the question to the group – what would you ideally like to see to make the process better? McDuffie replied that a procurement officer would be good; one person in one central clearinghouse for both information and follow-up. Pugh agreed, calling for one central location where people can come together and receive information. Details such as the cost of bidding on a project and the cost for specs should be offered for free.

The next meeting was set for Tuesday, October 24 at 9 a.m. at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (275 Oak St. Suite 150, Buffalo).

For the next meeting, the group was asked to think about the central clearinghouse and procurement officer ideas, and to come up with their “ideal” for how these would look when implemented. At this point don’t worry about cost or “do-ability”, just give us the ideal scenario and we’ll work from there. That will be the basis for the next meeting’s discussion.